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To Prof Antonio Barbedo Magelhaes
Oporto University, convenor the East Timor conferences

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Dear Professor,

I want to congratulate you in your endless efforts to promote the East Timor cause over the years. You and many others in Portugal probably don't realise how important the East Timor conferences, orgainsed by your university, have been for the international community but in particular for the Indonesian pro-democracy movement.

Your conferences has brought representatives from all parts of the world together. It is not only the sense of being part of an international network of solidarity with the people of East Timor, which is also very important, but evenmore the many new initiatives that are developed in the time we all assemble either in Lisbon or Oporto. Many international initiatives on East Timor originate from the East Timor conferences of the Oporto University. The opportunity of being together inspires us all and brings out all kinds of new ideas.

At least as important is the opportunity given by your university for Indonesians to participate in the conferences. I have seen the gradual change of attitude from the Indonesians attending the conferences. A few years ago the Indonesian participants had to use different names to protect their real identity, nowadays they appear in the open. The opportunity for Indonesian democrats to exchange thoughts with Timorese, the international community and the Portuguese public is really invaluable. The Indonesians go back home with the feeling of being part of an international network and strenghtened in the political convictions about the just demands of the East Timorese.

With the gradual disappearance of the two main issues Apartheid and Palestine from the international arena, the East Timor issue has gained much more prominence. If we combine this with the swift changes in Indonesia itself where Indonesian legitimacy over East Timor is increasingly being questioned by Indonesians themselves, I believe we are proceeding in the right way. Political initiatives are needed and international conferences like the Oporto University are the right approach. I want to thank you for your contribution to assist the Indonesian pro-democracy movement in understanding the East Timor issue to the full.

With warm greetings,

Liem Soei Liong
Editor, TAPOL Bulletin